Forest Insect and Disease Management Group, S&PF
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5220 - Evaluation

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Loblolly Pine "Die-Off", Oakmulgee R.D.

Forest Supervisor
National Forests in Alabama

ATTENTION: William C. Bodie

The loblolly pine "die-off" problem that has plagued the Oakmulgee Division of the Talladega National Forest since 1959 was re-evaluated during May 1976. The area of primary concern is located east of the Cahaba River in the Counties of Bibb, Chilton, Dallas, and Perry, Alabama.

The 24 one-quarter acre plots that were established in 1966 were re-examined, and data were taken concerning the overall condition of the individual plots. One-half, or 12, of the plots showed worsening conditions over what they were in 1971. Eight of the plots showed no difference than what they were in 1971, and only one plot indicated improvement since 1971. Three of the original plots have been clear-cut--these were classified as unaffected when they were established in 1966.

Fomes annosus was found in 12 of the 21 remaining established plots. F. annosus occurrence was determined on the presence of fruiting bodies. No root samples were taken for laboratory analysis. Increment borings taken at random over the plots indicated a definite reduction in growth over the last 10 years.

Loblolly pine "die-off" on the Oakmulgee Ranger District cannot, at the present time, be attributed to any one particular cause. However, a combination of factors seem to be involved, e.g., site conditions, possible interactions of Fomes annosus, and rotation age. You may wish to consider the following alternatives:

1. Reduce the rotation age of loblolly pine from 70 to 60 years

2. Maintain a basal area of 60 - 70 square feet per acre of pine in loblolly pine "die-off" stands

3. Regenerate to longleaf pine those sites that previously supported this species

4. Maintain present hardwood areas and where loblolly "die-off" is a problem, and if site permits, convert to hardwoods

5. Keep salvage operations to a minimum because continuous stand disturbance tends to increase such problems as Fomes annosus, bark beetle, and erosion

Three of the established "die-off" plots have been clearcut and several others are included in proposed timber sales. The rest of the "die-off" check plots can be discontinued and managed as District needs dictate.

We hope that these suggestions will be of value to you in developing the management plan for the Oakmulgee Ranger District. If we can be of any further assistance to you, please let us know.

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